

## ***Tokyo 1958 and Bad Boys: Postwar Narratives through Avant-garde Documentary***

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*Believing in progress does not mean believing  
that any progress has yet been made.*

Frank Kafka

### Abstract

Susumu Hani had a leading role in adapting the post-war avant-garde documentary movement in cinematographic terms. His films *Tokyo 1958* (Hani et al., 1958) and *Furyō Shōnen* (Hani, Bad Boys, 1960) materialised the demands for a new kind of documentary film after the crisis of realism and the ideological rupture of the left from the second half of the fifties. The films reclaimed the political sense that the term *avant-garde* had had before the war and drew on subjectivity to attack the old objectivism and to cast critical gazes on their present time. Previous cinematic conventions were challenged in three different ways:

-First, the documentary was liberated from its own constrictions. Through *sōgō geijutsu* (synthetic art), *Tokyo 1958* advanced the cross-genre dimension which culture circles had demanded for a decade. Hani, who had been a journalist and director of television documentaries, proposed a new 'synthesis of media' in *Furyō Shōnen*, giving cinema the heightened a heightened sense of immediacy in the present.

-Second, the notion of authorship was put into crisis. *Tokyo 1958* shows aesthetic diversity as a result of the collective work of the members of the multidisciplinary group *Shinema 58*. Hani further developed authorial self-negation in *Furyō Shōnen*, a film based on a number of personal memories.

-Third, through negotiation with postwar narratives, both films paradoxically draw on the available imaginary of the Japanese modernity only to dismantle the contradictory discourses of the new era. Hani added those sequences humanising the imperial family that served to legitimise their continuity in the post-war democracy. However, the satirical *Tokyo 1958* portrays the crown as an anachronistic feudal institution and *Furyō Shōnen* opens with the imperial household embodying the values of the new consumer society.

Subjectivity was key for the revitalisation of documentary and the study of it reveals how images are ultimately autonomous from any referent they are supposed to represent. The relationship between the world and its cinematographic representation is found in issues of ideological codification, which explain why these images show that the promises of the 'new democracy' fail rather than succeed.

## Introduction

The end of the Second World War in Japan saw the proliferation of a large number of culture circles involving unconventional alliances between writers, critics and artists, who sought new ways to approach reality and to investigate the possibilities of the postwar avant-garde. These authors led a vigorous debate on the concept of *kiroku*, which can be translated as document or documentary (in a wide sense not restricted to cinema). Through the concept of *sōgō geijutsu* (synthetic art), they initiated a formal opposition to genre boundaries and to all the limits previously established by literature and arts. This approach shaped a kind of avant-garde documentary movement that tried to overcome distinctions among antagonistic concepts: creation and recording; dream and fact; realism and surrealism; and, in short, the documentary and avant-garde.

This chapter discusses the role played by Susumu Hani, together with Hiroshi Teshigahara, in adapting this movement within cinematic terms. Two case studies will be presented: *Tokyo 1958* (Hani, Teshigahara et al., 1958) and *Furyō Shōnen* (*Bad Boys*, Hani, 1960). While there have been some recent contributions to the study of the role of documentary films in the postwar avant-garde (Toba 2010, Key 2011, Furuhata 2013, Matsumoto and Ishizaka 2008), to date these two films are key works that have not received the attention they deserve. How documentary film adapted ideas that were circulating about what kind of reality the avant-garde might provide, is subject of this chapter. The negotiation between images and postwar narratives in *Tokyo 1958* and *Furyō Shōnen* is tackled through an epistemological analysis that ultimately tries to update the value of these documentaries as documents in and of themselves, exploring the type of historical approach envisaged by these films.

## Documentary avant-garde: the synthesis of arts and political implications

Teshigahara Hiroshi played an essential role among the culture circles that flourished in WWII's aftermath, insofar as he became a bridge between documentary film and the avant-garde arts. In 1947, while Teshigahara was still a student of fine arts, he joined the *Seiki no*

*Kai* [Century Society] where he met the Marxist critics Kiyoteru Hanada, Hiroshi Sekine, Ichirō Hariu, the painter Tarō Okamoto and the writer Kōbō Abe.<sup>1</sup> This group had initiated formal experimentation as a new way of registering –and transforming– reality through their publications (*dōjinshi*),<sup>2</sup> *Seikigun* and *Seiki Gashū*. As Sekine claimed: “Revolution means overcoming reality. The way of overcoming reality can be found in our dreams. In other words, the synthesis of reality and dream is the new poets’ problem” (in Toba 2010: 51, my translation ).

In 1951, this group was divided into one a faction more interested in the avant-garde as a formal discourse, and another with a politically linked to the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). The latter founded the *Genzai no Kai* (Contemporary Society) in March 1952, a new group that tried to conjoin artistic forms with current affairs in order to change the perception of reality. Teshigahara incorporated the use of the term documentary in his *ruporutāju kaiga* (painting reportages, also termed *e-rupo*), made together with Tarō Okamoto and Hiroshi Katsuragwa. They portrayed labour and farming conditions in an exhibition held at MOMAT (Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo) in 1953, as part of the activities promoted by the JCP to trigger an agrarian revolution.<sup>3</sup> Teshigahara merged literary and painting reportages in the publication *E no Shukudai* (1953), which combined his surrealistic drawings with Hiroshi Sekine’s poems. Members of *Genzai no kai* continued these interdisciplinary creations and political commitment in the so-called *ebanashi* (narration-paintings), such as the *Nihon no Shōgen* (1955), a series of nine volumes including *Keimusho*, in which Teshigahara illustrated Masaru Kobayashi’s autobiographical experience as a member of the revolutionary Maoist group *Shokanha*.

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- Teshigahara and Abe epitomized a well-known alliance between literature and cinema during the sixties, which began with *Otohihana* (*The Pitfall*, 1962) and became internationally renowned with the release of *Suna no Onna* (*Woman of the Dunes*, 1964).

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- *Dōjinshi* were journals edited by the culture circles. For an account on previous discussions about left-wing art and avant-garde held by Akira Iwasaki and Hikaru Shimizu on one of these *dōjinshi*, see Nornes 2013: 15. An extensive piece of research on the activities of the culture circles in the fifties can be found in Toba 2010.

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- For an account on the *ruporutāju kaiga* during the first half of the fifties, see Toba 2010: 55-63.



An *E-rupo* entitled *Chūshoku* (Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1953).

At the end of the fifties, the exploration of new artistic forms through which to portray reality expanded into the cinematic arena, when documentary makers Susumu Hani and Toshio Matsumoto joined the *Genzaki no kai*. As a result, the group was reorganized into the *Kiroku Geijutsu no Kai* [Documentary Arts Society] in May 1957 and the notion of documentary acquired a broader sense: one not restricted to print, but including audiovisual and performing arts, as stated in their leitmotiv: “from printed culture to visual culture” (Key 2011: 13). Nornes (2006: 58) argues that the vitality of documentary film production, which had increased more than 1,000 percent from 1946, came together with a critical approach that demanded a renewal of this medium. The members of *Kiroku Geijutsu no kai* shared an aesthetic concern, and used the idea of the synthesis of arts not just to overcome genre boundaries, but also to promote an active exchange between documentary film and other means of expression. They believed that art was needed to meet the demands of contemporary life and so reaffirmed their commitment to opening up popular arts (*tashū geijutsu*) to the political realities of the time (Key 2011: 77). Authors such as Hanada claimed that while the American inspired neologism *avangyarudo* had spread during the postwar period, authors should return to the Japanese term *zen’ei*, in order to include the ideological and political implications that the proletarian avant-garde had had before the war (Hanada 1964: 133).<sup>4</sup> Thus, for the avant-garde documentary movement, revolutionary art and artistic revolution became intertwined objectives.

This political concern was widespread in documentary-maker circles during the fifties, amongst whom the JCP was an important influence. However, the discussion of the avant-garde documentary film was prefigured by the ideological rupture in the left caused by the

Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, which was heavily criticised by artists and intellectuals in Japan. Criticism of the party's orthodoxy led representatives of the New Left (*shinsayoku*), such as Hiroshi Teshigahara, Susumu Hani and Toshio Matsumoto, to react against the old realism and pretensions of objectivity, which were seen a mark of an authoritarianism typical of fascism, as well as of Stalinism, which they considered to be inscribed in the JCP. This resulted in a double ideological and aesthetical rupture, illustrated by a 1957 debate that Susumu Hani held with the veteran documentary maker Fumio Kamei, published in *Kinema Junpō*.<sup>5</sup>

The crisis of realism prompted authors to look for a redefinition of the documentary throughout the year 1958: Hanada coined the term sub-documentalism in February 1958 and Abe published his essay 'Proposal for a New Documentalism' in July 1958. A few years later, Matsumoto (1963:66-79) used Hanada and Abe's theories to develop his idea of the neo-documentary. The demands for a new kind of documentary film materialized in the collective work *Tokyo 1958*, made by Hiroshi Teshigahara and Susumu Hani, together with seven other members of the experimental group *Shinema 58*. The next sections explore how *Tokyo 1958* challenged previous cinematic conventions in three different ways: first, it questioned the documentary format itself, liberating it from genre constrictions; second, it rejected the notion of authorship; and third, it dismantled postwar narrative discourses and iconographies, including that of the imperial family, that were associated with Japan's new democracy and economic miracle.

### *Tokyo 1958: Redefining Documentary Boundaries and Postwar Narratives*

*Tokyo 1958* advanced the cross-genre dimension which had been demanded by the culture circles for a decade by breaking open the closed frames of literature, scenic and plastic arts, music, photography and cinema. *Shinema 58* members had developed theoretical concerns

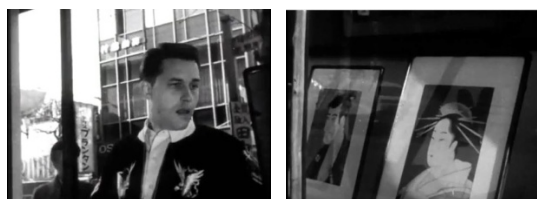
- Authors discussed which sort of reality it was possible to capture cinematographically as a consequence of the scandal caused by *Shiroi Sanmyaku* (*White Mountains* Sadao Imamura, 1957), which used animal species unknown in the area – including a stuffed bear -- where the documentary was shot (Hani et al. 1957).

and organised screenings and discussions around world avant-garde films (Hani 1959b:71). However, these activities triggered among them a practical interest, as Masahiro Ogi, one *Tokyo 1958*'s authors, stated: "... we always watched cutting-edge art film and did our best to explore new possibilities to prevent us from falling into old, pre-established formulas [...] While of course we respect cinema, we are a youth wanting to destroy this 'art' that has been consolidated over sixty years" (Ogi 1958: 72-73, my translation).

Even Hani, who had directed films based on technical aestheticism, explicitly showed his desire to incorporate the achievements made in other arts: "Today there is an exchange between different genres outside the cinematic arena: music, fine arts, dance, etc. I think we can make some headway in cinema if we try a similar collaboration" (Hani 1959b: 71, my translation). Together with Hani and Teshigahara, *Tokyo 1958* was produced by a heterodox team formed by the filmmaker Yoshirō Kawazu, scripwriter Zenzō Matsuyama, the journalist Kyushirō Kusakabe, writers Kanzaburō Mushanokōji and Ryuichirō Sakisaka, film critic Masahiro Ogi and the then head of the Tokyo National Film Centre, Sadamu Maruo. The multidisciplinary nature of this group favoured a creative integration of different arts. In addition, authors argued that documentary cinema had become subservient to the powers that be and they collaborated in order to liberate filmic techniques and contents from this servitude with only the self-imposed stricture to "not hoist the propaganda flag" (Ogi 1958: 72-73). As a consequence, *Tokyo 1958* ended up being a satirical portrayal of Tokyo, providing a new perspective on the present and calling into question the capital city's role as a symbol of Japanese modernity.

The film was composed of material vestiges taken from traditional arts and the mass media, manufactured and presented to the audience with unsettling meanings. This migration of images provided new possibilities for capturing the present and documenting how postwar society was changing. The opening sequence features a Western character staring lustfully at the figure of a woman portrayed in an *ukiyo-e*.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, theatrical sound effects, such as *taiko* (Japanese drums), *kakegoe* (the shouts and calls used in traditional Japanese

theatre, music and marital arts), and the song 'Eternaku', a piece of *gagaku* (Japanese classical music), can be heard on the soundtrack. This sequence already contains the main topics around which the film revolves: the coexistence of the past and present, the traditional and the modern, as well as the renewed relationships between the U.S.A. and Japan.



The clash between tradition and modernity, *Tokyo 1958*

### Iconographic Femininity, Tradition and Modernity

The formal heterogeneity of *Tokyo 1958* must also be understood in transnational terms. This work is an example of the international engagement amongst avant-garde authors: the film was made to be shown overseas at the World Competition of Experimental Cinema, which was part of the 1958 Brussels World's Fair (Ogi 1958: 72).<sup>7</sup> For this reason its voice-over narration is in French and English, and, as a result, the problems of identity faced in the film were arguably raised in order to be shown before a foreign audience. However, *Tokyo 1958* does not collapse into essentialist visions of Japan, and instead the issue of transculturality is continuously addressed. The opening scene portraying Tokyo through the eyes of an American character, raises the question of to whom the gaze belongs in the construction of a Japanese postwar identity. The scene also evokes the importance that foreigners have always had for Japan's self-definition (Befu and Manage 1991: 10, Yun Hui 2005: 2-3).



Borders between American and Japanese popular culture were indeed blurred by the second half of the fifties.<sup>8</sup> An example of this phenomenon are the music contests in which participants sang songs in English, embodying American popular culture, and even included Elvis Presley impersonators. As Igarashi (2000: 19-72) has noted, Japanese history from the Occupation period (1945-52) onwards is a sort of melodrama in which the relationship between the United States and Japan becomes sexualised. Igarashi's perspective is helpful in interrogating how both countries are visually represented in *Tokyo 1958*: these portrayals are highly gender coded. The U.S.A. plays the masculine role and is the subject of the gaze, while Japan plays a feminine role and becomes an object of desire.



Past and present in female bodies, *Tokyo 1958*

The female body is used throughout the documentary as a metonym for Japanese society; additionally femininity is used as an iconographic device that represents Japanese tradition, exemplified by the *ukiyo-e* desired by the American man in the opening scene and the actual-size painting of a woman molested by a Japanese salary man at the end of the film. Yet, femininity is also used to channel changes in the modern era. Tokyo became the symbol of the new consumer society which is illustrated through images of the Ginza district crammed with women waondering around department stores. Although it has been noted that the female body represented liberation during the Occupation period (Igarashi 2000: 57); women's sexuality also became the focus of both celebration and commodification, as is shown in the scene featuring poorly dressed young dancers in American-style night clubs. The subsequent television commercials by the cosmetic industry inserted into the film also suggest how women's bodies were subjected to market demands.



The worship of female beauty comes to represent a new era, officially announced by the Japanese government in 1956, when the Ministry of Economy published in the *White Book of Economy*, the popular sentence *mohaya sengo dewanai* [it's no longer the postwar]. The bulletin stated that Japan had reached the same economic levels as those prior to the war and that the hardships of the immediate postwar were over. Furthermore, *Tokyo 1958* shows scenes of television programmes featuring female characters practising calisthenics. Radio programmes about physical exercise were used to convey nationalist ideology during the militaristic years (Tanaka 1994: 195, Igarashi 2000: 47). However, they were readapted and integrated into the process of feminine commodification that *Tokyo 1958* shows together with the proliferation of electronic appliances that had started to fill Japanese homes. Objects of consumption became part of the imagery of the Japanese economic recovery, but here they are used to project a parody of runaway consumerism. Even the past can be commoditized and a traditional Shinto wedding is explained in economic terms by the voiceover: “a *furisode* is only ¥200,000; the *obi* ¥300,000e, the *uchikake* ¥250,000es, the ceremonial kimono ¥100,000 e and the rest around ¥150,000.e”



Electronic appliances (left), calisthenics (centre), and  
traditional Shinto wedding clothing (right), *Tokyo 1958*.

### The Idea of progress: conflict and representation

The film's unconventional style is configured by a multi-layered network of images, including references to four photographic reports about Tokyo's urban geography, published between 1952 and 1956 in the collection *Iwanami Shashin Bunko*, edited by Susumu Hani and the photographer Yōnosuke Natori. *Tokyo 1958* indexes the metatextual relations with these reports in the sequence that shows population statistics,

including the numbers of births and deaths per year, the percentage of suicides, as well as the amount number of cameras and cinemas per inhabitant. One problem covered is the tonnes of rubbish that the metropolis generates, an issue much discussed at the time, which was not sorted out until the urban restructuring for the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. While the media promoted Tokyo as a *kokusai toshi* ("international city"), people mocked its actual state of hygiene, jokingly referring to it as the *kusai toshi* ("smelly city") (Igarashi 2000: 150).



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

"*Tōkyō. Daitokai no kao*", (n° 47, 10-1-1952) (Fig. 1). "*Tōkyō annai*" (n° 68, 25-7-1952) (Fig.2).

"*Tōkyō wan*" (n°112, 10-2-1954) (Fig. 3)., "*Tōkyō-to*" (n°201, 25-9-1956) (Fig.4).

, *Iwanami Shashin Bunko* series.

These scenes' newsreel style contrasts with several of unrealistic effects in the rest of the film, recalling the 1920s avant-gardes, which include: strong chiaroscuros, expressionist lighting, free camera movements, unfocused takes, sharp angles and even upside-down shots. One of these techniques intersperses black and white with colour takes that reinforce the visual multidimensionality of the documentary. This becomes a powerful device to highlight the clash between the old and the new, tackled in both aesthetic and narrative terms. *Tokyo 1958* participates in the postwar discussion on 'Japaneseness' (*nihonjinron*), but shows the perpetuation of the past in the present from the working class' point of view. Thus, the images of the masses commuting to work, overlapped with *ukiyo-e* cuttings of Edo period commoners, adds a political nuance questioning the idea of 'progress' as such. As a consequence, while *Tokyo 1958* is a documentary about a space, the urban landscape

of the Japanese capital, it is also about time. The film is a dialogue with its historical period and the subjectivities of the time. Even the idea of technological development, basis of the economic growth, is cast into doubt with the sequences of labourers constructing a road by hand, in the same way it was portrayed on a painting from the premodern era.



The idea of 'progress' caricaturized (1): old and new labourers. *Tokyo 1958*

The film articulates an ironic demystification of the past, and the sentence “Japan as a fusion of tradition and modernity” is repeated in a satiric tone, ridiculing the militarist discourse of wartime, which often blended the Japan’s legendary past with images of the nation’s industrial power.<sup>9</sup> *Tokyo 1958* also shows newsreel images of contemporary ministers and businessmen on whose faces are superimposed caricaturist portraits of the Edo period, which humorously raises the question of the endogamous perpetuity of economic and political powers. Thus, the postwar attempt to break with the militarist past in the new democracy is demonstrated to be a deception. The narration sardonically notes (the criticism remains implicit) that Bamboko Ono, president of the Lower House, and Michiru Sekitome, president of Sakuma Dam’s construction company, are in fact “descendants of distinguished samurai clans.” The montage with old engravings showing Japanese subjects bowing before a superior becomes a powerful device. Nonverbally, it alerts the audience to the uninterrupted subjugation of Japanese people by a power structure that, while masquerades as a “new form of authority”, actually dates back to the feudal past.

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<sup>9</sup> Images combining technological development with Japan’s old legends and founding myths can be found in propaganda films such as the German-Japanese production *Atarashiki Tsuchi / Die Tochter des Samurai* (The Daughter of the Samurai, Arnold Frank and Mansaku Itami, 1937) or in the animated film *Momotarō no Umiwashi* (Momotaro’s Sea Eagles, Mitsuyo Seo, 1942)



The idea of 'progress' caricaturized (2): the perpetuation of feudal power. *Tokyo 1958*

### An iconography of legitimation

The Emperor Shōwa's figure is eventually included amongst these old elites of ancestral origins. *Tokyo 1958* does not deal with the issue of the war responsibility, but raises interesting questions regarding the stasis of Japanese society. Hirohito was recognised throughout the world as a symbol of Japanese militarism, a fact weighing against the survival of the monarchy. How is it then that could the imperial household survive after the Japan's surrender? Some clues may be found through the study of the iconography related to the monarchy. Hirohito's portrayal on the balcony of the imperial residence, shown in *Tokyo 1958*, was part of the public relations machinery that worked to legitimise the imperial family's existence post-war. However, *Tokyo 1958* interestingly works a counter-current which dismantles the visual representations that had helped to shape the image of the imperial family to the demands of postwar democracy. The process of humanizing the former deity became a political issue as soon as it was understood that the Allies were supporting the Japanese monarchy's after the war, but this narrative and iconographic metamorphosis was necessary for the Emperor's continuity even after the Occupation period. As Yasuhiro Nakasone acknowledged in 1957, in a discussion within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP): "Japan must establish an image of the emperor as a human being (*ningen tennō*), which would enable him and the imperial family to become deeply rooted in the life of the people" (cited in Shillony 2005: 234).



The human emperor (*ningen tennō*), Tokyo 1958

The images of Hirohito in *Tokyo 1958* were part of a new phenomenon when they are compared to those taken before the surrender. The few pictures available until then had been extremely carefully staged. They sought to represent emperor as a head of state, commander-in-chief and a living god (*arahitogami*) according to the State Shinto (Earhart 2008: 11). Those photographs tried to project a divine aura isolating the imperial family members from the masses. The family was posed in a formal manner, often wearing uniforms that symbolised their military or religious power.



Visual representation before the surrender:

The Shōwa Emperor Coronation's in 1928 (reprinted on 28 March 1945, left).

The imperial family on 7 December 1941 (right).

Nonetheless, a metamorphosis from the sacred to the profane can be seen in the battery of images introduced to the collective memory after the surrender. The photo of General MacArthur with Hirohito, taken at the U.S. Embassy on 27 September 1945, was one of those images that marked the beginning of a new pattern of representation in which the Emperor was given a corporeal quality. Akiyuki Nosaka noted a correlation between physical strength and national power symbolically embodied by both figures: the Emperor is visibly smaller than General MacArthur, who evoked the corporeality of the victors (Ide

1991: 20). Details of the meeting are outlined by Igarashi (2000: 28-35), for whom this image contains the necessary ingredients found in melodrama: the heroic acceptance of humiliation, but also the sexualised power relations which makes this picture as their “analogous to a wedding photo” (Nosaka 1977: 447). However, this snapshot also symbolises an ending funeral. The figure of the Emperor’s worn-out body is dressed in a formal black suit of the sort also worn to funerals, which was nothing less than the evidence of the God’s death; and it also signified end of the divine empire which he had been worshipped as the head of the nation’s extended family (*kazoku-kokka*).



MacArthur and Hirohito.

The U.S. Embassy in Japan. (27 September 1945).

The discourse of the Emperor’s humanization officially began on New Year’s day of 1946, through a radio speech in which Hirohito renounced his divinity. Nevertheless, the beginning of the transition to the profane can be found in Hirohito’s first radio speech announcing the surrender (*Gyokuon- hōsō*), broadcast on 15 August 1945, in which the Japanese people heard the Emperor’s voice for the first time. Certainly the archaic Japanese he spoke made that broadcast difficult to understand, but a semiotic analysis reveals that it was the voice itself that constituted the true message. From an historical perspective, Shillony (2005: 205) suggests that this moment might not have been that crucial because caused no sensation in the Japanese press; however it should be noted that in discursive



terms, it was a key moment, which provided a first step in preparing a new iconography.<sup>10</sup> Igarashi certainly shows that this speech offered a possible narrative for both the citizens of the United States and Japan, in which paradoxically, the autocratic power of the Emperor was seen as the key to peace. As long as this contradiction remained intact, his responsibility in the war could be exonerated (Igarashi 2000: 26).

The attempt to bring Hirohito closer to the masses continued through extensive tours around the country, made with the approval of the Occupation authorities. As Shillony (2005: 222) pointed out, unlike the Meiji tours, which were aimed to impress the people with the majesty of the monarch, post-war tours were aimed to present him with a “human figure”. These trips worked to redefine the crown as the symbol of the nation’s unity. Japan was the only country in the world until the Spanish Constitution of 1978, whose constitution explicitly defined the monarch as the “symbol” of the nation (Ruoff 2001: 52); and as a condition for allowing the imperial household to continue was that the Emperor have no political role.<sup>11</sup> However, institutional messages are mocked through the employment of dysfunctional images. First, Hirohito is depicted right after the scene highlighting how feudal elites continue to hold political and economic power in the democratic era. Second, the monarch and the people are presented as visually separate; the former looks down from the balcony and the crowd looks up. This vertically divided space echoes the old hierarchy and highlights the distance between the regent and his subjects,

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<sup>10</sup> The broadcast of August 15th and subsequent representations from that moment onwards, gave the emperor an earthy quality that made an incorporeal figure corporeal: before, the Emperor had been an unattainable figure surrounded by mysticism, who lived in an inaccessible imperial palace. However, the public was allowed to enter the palace for the first time in 1948, in order to receive the Emperor’s greeting from the balcony. Even the name of the palace changed, from the military-sounding *kyūjō* (palace castle) to the civilian-sounding *kōkyō* (imperial residence) (Shillony 2005: 227). These appearances took place on the emperor’s birthday on April 29th, and on January 2nd which is when the Tokyo 1958 scene was shot.

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– However, the Emperor was never a completely depoliticised figure since the American authorities used him as a bulwark against communism (Ruoff 2001: 7)



which is also emphasised at the event's denouement: the emperor turns left and the masses turn right; after this brief encounter they go back to their respective homes, moving, physically and symbolically, in opposite directions and turning their backs on each other. Through this collision of shots, to use Eisenstein's terminology, *Tokyo 1958* manages to rupture both the mise-en-scène and the discourse which this event was meant to convey. The ideological construction of meaning through montage was already a practice of Soviet formalist filmmakers, but what this reemployment of footage reveals is the coexistence of opposing political discourses, with contradictions that can be seen to potentially overlap in a single image. *Tokyo 1958* takes advantage of the malleable nature of images in order to insert irreverent narratives.



Emperor turning his back on the people, *Tokyo 1958*.

### What kind of document is it?

If avant-garde authors explicitly promoted a subjective approach to reality, to what extent do these images mirror society? What kind of historical approach do they allow? Is a film like *Tokyo 1958* a suitable document for scholarly analysis? Recent contributions in the sociology of media, memory studies, and the archaeology of images show that rather than approaching images as documents of factual truths, they can be studied according to their value as witnesses to the fears, anxieties and hopes existing at the moment they were (re)taken.

Far from considering subjectivity (*shutaisei*) as an obstacle to insights about the past, the historical study of subjectivities through images can become an enriching object of analysis, as has been demonstrated by various recent historical and sociological approaches to cinema. Jackson argues that “cinema must be considered as one of the repositories of

twentieth century thought as it widely projects the mentality of the men and women who make films” (Jackson 1983: 14). Additionally, other authors note the futility of using cinema to understand pro-filmic reality and instead call attention to films’ ability to capture the era’s zeitgeist including ideologies, daydreams and traumas of the society that have produced them (Sorlin 1985: 42, Ferro 1980: 67). More recently, scholars have warned that in the construction of the past, images do not reproduce facts, they only represent them, and as a result we can only have access to one version of reality (Sánchez-Biosca 2008: 38). This evidences the impossibility of liberating images from synchronic necessities and interests of any kind (ibid.). In light of this theorising, any hermeneutic analysis of the representations of modernity and the imperial family, must acknowledge that the images are detached from their referent – that which they are supposed to represent. In other words, the relationship between the world and its cinematographic representation depends on issues of historical codification (Prince 1993: 16-28), although this codification is governed by a variety of ideological and political criteria that condition the diverse production of meanings.

While subjectivity became key to the discussions on the revitalisation of documentary film, Matsumoto and Hani represented two opposite currents within the New Left, both in theory and practice. On the one hand, Matsumoto (1961: 131) emphasised that the author’s subjectivity was necessary in order to attack totalitarian cinema. The images projected referred to the filmmakers’ subconscious, including their memories, emotions and traumas. Authors needed to interrogate film as a medium and search for different ways of perceiving reality, rejecting realism and challenging perception automatisms through Hanada’s defamiliarisation strategies (cfr. Matsumoto et al. 1967: 20-36). On the other hand, Hani claimed that filmmakers should capture another kind of subjectivity, that of the characters before the cameras. To some extent, Hani together with Teshigahara, defended the author’s “self-negation” (*jikohitei*) in the debates published between the late fifties and early sixties.

Consequently, while Matsumoto highlighted the weight of the filmmaker in the (re)production of reality, the originality of *Tokyo 1958*’s originality lies precisely in the fact that it is a collective work, relying on an aesthetic diversity, which puts into question the notion of authorship. Hani further developed the author’s self-negation in *Furyō Sshōnen*, a

film based on a number of personal memories. The story revolves around Asai, an eighteen-year old boy who is arrested after robbing a jeweler's and who is sent to Kurihama reformatory. While Asai's story is fictional, the film is based on the lives of the petty criminals who play themselves. Hani was inspired by *Tobenai Tsubasa* (Aiko Jinushi, 1958), a book that follows the *seikatsu kiroku* (life documentary) genre by documenting the autobiographical narratives of Kurihama reformatory inmates. However, Hani shot the film with a great degree of improvisation, allowing the protagonists, many of whom were former inmates of that reformatory, to reenact robberies and their imprisonment according to their own memories.

### Immediacy to the Present Time in *Furyō Shōnen*

*Furyō Shōnen* continues *Tokyo 1958*'s negotiation with postwar narratives and again, Hani includes a scene showing another member of the imperial family, Takako (or Princess Suga), daughter of Emperor Hirohito's daughter. The princess had become a commoner a few months previously, after marrying Shimazu Hisanaga, a businessman and scion of the daimyo of Satsuma clan. The matrimonial union of the imperial family with a plebe became had become a topical issue after the marriage of Crown Prince Akihito had married to a "commoner" the year before, which had caused a great sensation in the Japanese press.<sup>12</sup> *Furyō Shōnen* presents a new image of Princess Suga as a commoner, as she is seen wearing a casual dress and going shopping around Ginza's boutiques.



Princess Suga, *Furyō Shōnen*.

<sup>12</sup> - The Japanese press referred to the wedding as a love match. At a time when government was considering revisions to Japan's constitution, the popularity of the democratic marriage served to show that monarchy had become thoroughly embedded in Japan's postwar culture (Ruoff 2001: 3).

This scene is followed by Asai being driven to a police station, while his voice-over states that the first time he saw Ginza was when he was inside a police van. The screenplay makes no reference to this sequence and the images of Princess Suga undoubtedly were filmed by chance.<sup>13</sup> This fact illustrates how Hani took the ideas of the avant-garde documentary and adapted them to suit his own interests. Thus, *Furyō Shōnen* shifts from the 'synthesis of arts' to a new kind of 'synthesis of media', which provided a heightened sense of immediacy that, according to Hani (1960b: 52), cinema needed. Hani believed that documentary should be enriched by the journalistic practices that existed in the mass media of the time: "I think we could think about audio-visual art focusing on the three contemporary means of communication: radio, television and cinema. Interrelating these three media and dealing with sharing problems might help to set up an audiovisual method". (Hani 1959a: 33, my translation).

Hani's attempt to challenge the notion of documentary was shaped by his early career: first as a journalist for *Kyōdō News*, second as a documentary maker for Iwanami Eiga and, finally, as one of the earliest Japanese directors of television documentaries.<sup>14</sup> While he defended the immediacy of newsreels (Hani 1958: 30), he was also enthusiastic about the possibilities of television, and he coined the neologism *telementari* –blending "television" and "documentary"– in which he praised the higher degree of improvisation that the new medium allowed (Hani 1960a: 69-76).

Adding current affairs to cinema become a recurrent device during the renewal of the cinematic language of the sixties, which inaugurated what Furuhashi Yuriko (2013) calls the "cinema of actuality". Hani considered that filmmakers "should make the gap between reality and artistic expression disappear" by linking cinema to its present moment (Hani

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- The script was published in *Kinema Junpō: Meisaku sShinarioshū*, special number, 4-1960, pp.135-142

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- Hani directed several episodes of *Nenrin no himitsu* [Secrets of the Year], which was aired on Fuji TV between 1959 and 1960.

1959c: 49). Indeed, *Furyō Shōnen* caused a sensation among critics because of the way it transcended the borders between reality and fiction (Iijima 1960: 26). By incorporating journalistic practices, the film was able to capture the icons of Japanese economic growth that existed in popular culture. Thus the opening sequence includes takes of small groups of young boys wearing Hawaiian T-shirts and girls in western dresses, which mirrored the style spreading among teenagers from the late fifties, after the *taiyōzoku* phenomenon. That trend reached its height with the adaptation of Sintarō Ishihara's novel, *Taiyō no Kisetsu* (*Season of the Sun*). It continued with a group of films released in the summer of 1956 that projected a bucolic image of the new Japan through portraying the carefree lives of young adults from wealthy families that lived in opulent residences along the Shonan Coast. However, Hani addresses the fallacies of this imaginary, replacing the point of view of the privileged with that a dark vision of the Japanese economic miracle as seen by the lumpen proletariat.



References to the *taiyōzoku* phenomenon, *Furyō Shōnen*

#### Capitalist monarchy

As in *Tokyo 1958*, the scene of Princess Suga shopping connects with the postwar demystification process in which the imperial family was portrayed as being interested in banal problems. Again, these images were something new. Until that point, members of the imperial household had rarely been seen to worry about materialistic issues. According to Earhart (2008: 12), unlike European monarchies from the times of the Roman emperors until today, Japanese emperors did not handle currency, as money was considered to be too mundane and defiling for a divinity. To a great extent, this association of the imperial family with capitalism was used to show how “the good enemy becomes converted in to a

representative of the U.S. values” (Igarashi 2000: 29). This fact marked a shift to the historical representation of the monarchy in secular terms. As Shillony (2005: 227) notes, Hirohito and his wife visited a department store in Ginza for the first time in 1954. From mid-fifties, the Emperor was associated with sports; Hirohito attended sumo tournaments, baseball matches and he presided over the opening ceremonies at international events, such as the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo. Thus, the Emperor became “a mortal man who loved ‘chocolate-covered peanuts, Mickey Mouse, baseball and marine biology’” (Earhart 2008: 6). The religious, political and military symbolism among the members of the royalty was replaced by a new association with Japan’s consumer society. The event of Princess Suga going shopping was part of a strategy designed by the imperial household to show that the crown was closer to the worries and interests of ordinary people. These images were then captured by journalists and photographers, who also enter the scene in *Furyō Shōnen*.

However, Hani did not join the official political discourse that attempted to bring the imperial family to the masses. *Furyō Shōnen* neither humanizes nor makes them accessible; rather it shows a capitalist monarchy indifferent to the problems of the lower classes. The underlying criticism in this sequence is articulated by overlapping the scene of Princess Suga with Asai’s narration, stating that the first time he saw Ginza was inside a prison van. The following scene shows a van driving Asai to a police station only to discover that his father died during the war, revealing an uneasy paradox: the elites who had been responsible for the war enjoy the benefits of consumer society while the victims of the war are forgotten by the system. Nevertheless, the film challenges the victimism found in postwar humanism; after all, *Furyō Shōnen* is the story of a young delinquent. While the question of war responsibility is not really tackled, through this personal experience, the film attacks institutions and the idea of the state as an extension of the imperial family. *Furyō Shōnen* tears down the notion of family (*ie*), which cemented the ideology of the family-nation (*kazoku kokka*) that was promoted during the militarism (Standish 2011: 72); but it also rejects the official postwar policy that attempted to adapt the image of the imperial family to the new political context. Far from portraying the royals as every day ordinary citizens, Hani emphasizes their distance from the masses. Through an intelligent use of montage, he contrasts the privileges enjoyed by the Japanese elites (represented by

the princess) with the hardships of the lumpen proletariat (represented by the character of Asai).

### Conclusion

*Tokyo 1958* and *Furyō Shōnen* are two key works which help us understand how the ideas of the avant-garde documentary movement were implemented in cinematographic terms. They adopted the political sense that the term *avant-garde* had had before the war, while reacting against war era propaganda, and the realism promoted by the old left, by linking subjective gazes to the present era. Hani, and Teshigahara, together with the members of *Shinario 58*, challenged the notion of *auteur*, and they expanded the boundaries of the documentary genre by employing the idea of synthesis: creating alliances with other arts, which resulted in the heterodox style of *Tokyo 1958*. Two years later in *Furyō Shōnen*, Hani added the sense of immediacy that had already existed in newsreels and that was then being incorporated into the new medium of television. With this semi-documentary, Hani not only expanded the documentary genre across different forms of mass media, he also defied its format, as such, by erasing the boundaries between reality and fiction.

*Tokyo 1958* and *Furyō Shōnen* also became cutting-edge works in terms of narrative, providing an alternative portrayal of modernity and the imperial family by reusing existing imagery and deliberately manipulating it in order to add new political messages. Both films witnessed a metamorphosis of the imperial family through images of desacralization that marked the beginning of Japan's new era. However, these works only resorted to institutional mechanisms of visual representation to highlight their contradictions. *Tokyo 1958* presents a dirty capital with laborers working under the same conditions as those of the Edo period. *Furyō Shōnen* features a war orphan who is arrested after being forgotten by the system. Both films dismantle the political discourse of the imperial family that was promoted by the postwar authorities; while the monarchy became a powerful symbol of peace and democracy, the hereditary throne also represented an undemocratic institution that remained in power even after losing the war that had been declared in its name. In



*Furyō Shōnen*, the imperial household finally embodied the values of the new consumer society, which was the core of the modernity represented in *Tokyo 1958*.

Additionally, recent studies of the value of the image as a document enrich the contemporary study of these films. The authors of the avant-garde documentary movement explicitly stated that rather than duplicating reality, documentaries only present a subjective selection of fragments from the outside world. The archaeological study of these works reveals the existing substrates of different narratives that have been deposited over the image through the everlasting production of meanings. This explains how, while the 'humanization' of the imperial family could be used to legitimise the political situation of the time, the same iconography could also be used to question it. That is only possible if images are autonomous and ultimately divorced from any referent that they are supposed to represent. This fact means that images are not free from being reinterpreted according to interests and necessities of the time; however, this also opens the door to new studies on coexisting narratives that are continuously renegotiated. Consequently, *Tokyo 1958* and *Furyō Shōnen* raise questions about the present rather than the past. These two films demonstrate, and participate in, the postwar conflicts of identity, the reconfiguration of old myths, and the contradictions inherent in economic growth in order to, eventually, show how the promises of the 'new democracy' fail rather than succeed.

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